



# PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: APRIL 28, 2004

ITEM NUMBER:

SUBJECT: REQUEST TO REMOVE CITY TREE – POLICE FACILITY, 99 FAIR DRIVE

DATE: APRIL 21, 2004

FROM: PUBLIC SERVICES DEPARTMENT

PRESENTATION BY: BRUCE A. HARTLEY, MAINTENANCE SERVICES MANAGER

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: BRUCE A. HARTLEY, 714-754-5164

## RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Commission approve the request to remove one Indian Laurel Fig tree located in front of the City of Costa Mesa Police Facility, 99 Fair Drive, and replace it with three trees (one twenty-four inch box-size and two fifteen gallon-size) to be replanted on site.

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## BACKGROUND

A Ficus tree located on the north side of the City of Costa Mesa Police Facility has invasive roots, which have caused damage to the sewer lateral that serves the entire building. The roots of the tree frequently clog the sewer line, resulting in sewage backing up into the lowest level of the building if not remedied quickly. This building is an essential public facility operating twenty-four hours each day. The building supports not only public safety staff, but has a jail on the lowest level of the building housing incarcerated individuals. When the sewer line is blocked, all water use in the building must cease until the line is cleared.

## ANALYSIS

This tree removal request has been initiated by the Maintenance Services Division of the Public Services Department due to the damage caused to the sewer line for the Police Facility and the repetitive line blockages as a result of tree roots. The tree causing the damage is an Indian Laurel Fig, *Ficus microcarpa* 'Nitida'. It is approximately thirty-five feet (35') in height, with a trunk diameter of twenty-eight inches (28"). It is in good condition. The tree is located seven feet (7') from the sewer lateral. See Attachment 1.

The tree is not a good candidate for relocating, due to its size and age. Although possible, it would be very expensive and have a poor likelihood of survival.

The sewer lateral to the Police Facility has become blocked an average of three times each year for the past few years, resulting in emergency call-out of a roter service to clear the line, at a cost of approximately \$250 for each occurrence. In addition, City staff has sometimes been called out after hours to address the problem, at a significant cost due to overtime rates.

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In an attempt to lessen the financial impacts and prevent interruption in police operations, the sewer line has been proactively cleaned twice each year to prevent root obstruction. This has lessened the frequency of line blockages, but has not eliminated them entirely. The line has been inspected with video camera equipment, which verified the poor condition of the pipe and the magnitude of the root intrusion.

The reoccurring damage to the sewer lateral for this public facility could be prevented by removal of the offending tree. The documented damage to vital infrastructure meets the requirements for a Category 1 – Health and Safety Removal, as specified in Section 4.0.1 of the Streetscape and Median Development Standards (Standards). This is the Council adopted policy which regulates the removal of City owned trees. This particular species of tree is also listed as a “Problem Tree Species” in Section 4.0.2 – Accelerated Removals of the Standards, which allows for the removal of the tree at the property owners’ expense.

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The Maintenance Services Division routinely approves the removal of parkway trees in situations where the homeowner has experienced repetitive sewer line blockages or damage due to a City owned parkway tree. The City Arborist investigates the field conditions and determines the location of the sewer later in relation to the parkway tree and evaluates the likelihood that the City tree caused the damage. Documentation of the repair and/or rooter costs must be provided by the homeowner prior to the authorization for removal. The cost of this type of tree removal is paid for by the City.

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If approved for removal, the Ficus tree would be replaced with three trees (one twenty-four inch box-size and two fifteen gallon-size) to be replanted on site, along the front of the Police Facility.

## ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

1. The Commission could approve the request to remove one Indian Laurel Fig, *Ficus microphylla*, from in front of the Costa Mesa Police Facility, 99 Fair Drive, with the condition that the tree be replaced on a three to one ratio, with one twenty-four inch box-size tree and two 15 gallon-size trees to be replanted on site.
2. The Commission could require the relocation of this tree to another site. However, survival is unlikely, and it is estimated that the work would cost in excess of \$10,000.
3. The Commission could deny the request.

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## FISCAL REVIEW

The cost to remove the tree would be \$390. The cost to replant the three trees required would be \$200, if completed by City staff. The cost to relocate the tree would be in excess of \$10,000.

## LEGAL REVIEW

No legal review is required for this item.

## CONCLUSION

The request for removal of the tree is based on the repetitive damage the tree has caused to the sewer lateral for the Police Facility. The impact of the sewage backups has been significant and costly. The request meets the guidelines in the Streetscape and Median Development Standards for removal. It is recommended that the Commission approve the request for the removal of the City-owned tree

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BRUCE A HARTLEY  
Maintenance Services Manager

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WILLIAM J. MORRIS  
Public Services Director

ATTACHMENTS: 1 [Photographs of Tree](#)

C: Allan L. Roeder, City Manager  
William J. Morris, Public Services Director  
John D. Hensley, Police Chief

| File Name 042804-Police Facility Tree Staff Report Date 04/19/03

Time 9:00 a.m.

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